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Supporting Parent Engagement in Linguistically Diverse Families to Promote Young Children's Learning

Implications for Early Care and Education Policy

Sandra Barrueco, Ph.D.
The Catholic University of America

&

Sheila Smith, Ph.D.
Samuel A. Stephens, Ph.D.
National Center for Children in Poverty
Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University

July 2015

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Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the valuable comments, questions, and suggestions on earlier drafts that we received from Gigliana Melzi, our external reviewer, of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University and from Meryl Barofsky, Amanda Clincy, Kathleen Dwyer, and Ann Rivera of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families in the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Suggested citation: Barrueco, S., Smith, S., & Stephens, S. (2015). *Supporting parent engagement in linguistically diverse families to promote young children's learning: Implications for early care and education policy*. New York, NY: Child Care & Early Education Research Connections.

Supporting Parent Engagement in Linguistically Diverse Families to Promote Young Children's Learning

Implications for Early Care and Education Policy

Overview

There is wide agreement that early care and education programs should support parent engagement linked to early learning for all families, including families from diverse language and cultural backgrounds. This brief highlights research that can inform policies to expand the capacity of early care and education programs to promote parent engagement in linguistically diverse families with young children. Policy initiatives that could strengthen the capacity of early care and education programs to support parent engagement in these families include:

- ▶ establishing program requirements and quality standards that specifically address the needs and interests of families whose home language is not English;
- ▶ providing educational opportunities to individuals who can increase the linguistic diversity and cultural competency of the early care and education workforce;
- ▶ providing resources to support programs' use of parent engagement practices and activities that are most promising for linguistically diverse families; and
- ▶ using data to understand the participation of linguistically diverse families in parent engagement activities and inform efforts to strengthen programs' capacity to engage diverse families.

Parents' central role in their young children's learning is evident in a wide range of parenting behaviors. Some of these behaviors are embedded in daily routines, such as parents' responsive verbal play with infants and toddlers during bath time and conversation with preschoolers while preparing dinner. In other instances, parents engage in highly intentional efforts to help children learn, as when they explain the meaning of words while reading a storybook or when they help a child practice counting. The interactions parents have with the adults who care for and teach their children in child care and early education settings can also influence children's development. Through these interactions, both parents and caregivers can learn about ways to support children's learning in light of their individual needs and circumstances. A large body of research shows that varied forms of parent engagement have a positive influence on children's learning and development (e.g., Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Durand, 2011; Fan & Chen, 2001; Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Jaynes, 2012; Van Voorhis, Maier, Epstein, & Lloyd, 2013).

There is wide agreement that early care and education programs should support parent engagement that promotes children's early learning, and that this support should be inclusive of diverse families.¹ This brief highlights research that can inform policies aimed at building the capacity of early care and education programs to promote parent engagement in linguistically diverse families. The term, "parent engagement," as used in this brief, refers to two types of activity: 1) parents' nurturing, responsive interactions with their children, at home and in the community, that help children acquire competencies they need for school success, and 2) interactions parents have with providers in early care and education settings that help both parents and providers promote children's learning and development. Linguistically diverse families are those whose home language is not English and whose family members may have varying degrees of proficiency in English, including limited English speaking and reading skills.

Designing policies that help programs promote parent engagement in linguistically diverse families could benefit a large and growing number of children. Currently, of the approximately 23 million children in the United States under the age of six years, 8% live in households where no one over the age of 14 is proficient in English.² Young children of immigrants comprise 25 percent of all children under nine years, and 47 percent of foreign born parents of children in this age range report limited English proficiency (Park & McHugh, 2014). Fostering parent engagement in linguistically diverse families during the early childhood period can promote school readiness among children who face higher educational risks, including family poverty and linguistic isolation, while also leveraging key family strengths.

The remainder of this brief addresses three interrelated questions:

- 1) What do we know about linguistically diverse families and how parents in these families support their young children's learning and development?
- 2) What features of early care and education programs appear to contribute to high levels of parent engagement in linguistically diverse families?
- 3) What policies can help increase the capacity of early care and education programs to support parent engagement in linguistically diverse families?

What do we know about linguistically diverse families and how parents in these families support their young children's learning and development?

While examining the research on parent engagement of linguistically diverse families, it is important to recognize that:

- ▶ these families are a diverse group, although much of the research has focused on Spanish-speaking families or families with a Hispanic background;
- ▶ linguistically diverse families as a group share many characteristics with monolingual English-speaking parents, while many also have experiences that may pose different challenges and opportunities for parent engagement; and
- ▶ most parent engagement studies, including those concerned with immigrant families or families speaking a language other than English at home, provide limited information about parents' language proficiency and about other potential characteristics that may influence parent engagement; even when more information is provided, most studies have not been able to disentangle the role of English proficiency from other important characteristics affecting parent engagement in linguistically diverse families.

Compared to families headed by English-only speakers, linguistically diverse families are more likely to be poor, live in economically and linguistically isolated communities, and experience discrimination (Cannon, Jacknowitz, & Karoly, 2012; Skinner, Wight, Aratani, Cooper, & Thampi, 2010; Whatley & Batalova, 2013). Consequently, the children in these families face risks to their development that are similar to those affecting children in other low-income families. At the same time, many linguistically diverse families confront additional challenges. Language barriers may discourage parents from engaging in their children's early care and education, such as attending parent orientation or parent-teacher meetings (Park & McHugh, 2014; Trainor, 2010; Turney & Kao, 2009). Many of these parents are immigrants to the United States³ who may feel uncomfortable interacting with early care and education teachers due to a lack of familiarity with U.S. educational institutions (Nwosu, Batalova, & Auclair, 2014; Whatley & Batalova, 2013). Some of these immigrants may be undocumented and therefore wary of involvement with public agencies and programs.⁴ Others may be refugees coping with the consequences of dislocation and trauma.⁵

Families in which a non-English language is spoken in the home, irrespective of English language proficiency, also bring strengths to their young children's development and learning. For example, a higher percentage of Hispanic families regularly eat meals together than other groups (59% compared with the national average of 46%) and most engage in activities at home that promote learning, including storytelling, singing, and teaching letters and numbers (Murphy, Guzman, & Torres, 2014). Hispanic parents with limited English skills have been found to convey high educational aspirations to their children through stories and conversation (McWayne, Melzi, Schick, Kennedy, & Mundt, 2013; McWayne & Melzi, 2014). Similarly, qualitative research with families from Hmong, Somali, and Hispanic backgrounds, although with unknown English language proficiency, have documented parents' support of their children's learning in everyday routines, such as a Somali mother's report that she listens to her young children's frequent questions about everyday situations and offers explanations (Emarita, 2007).

Overall, parents in linguistically diverse families, including those with limited English proficiency, have been found to support their children's early learning through home- and community-based activities, typically woven into everyday life (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; McWayne & Melzi, 2014). These parents typically engage in home- and community-based activities more frequently than program-based activities such as volunteering in the classroom or participating in parent-teacher organizations (Delgado Gaitan, 1992; McWayne, Campos, & Owsianik, 2008; Mendez, Westerberg, & Thibeault, 2013; Reese, Balzano, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 1995; Riojas-Cortez & Flores, 2009; Valencia & Black, 2002). Research showing this pattern has primarily focused on Hispanic families, but includes studies of families with other cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including East Indian, East Asian, and Chinese (Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009).

Several factors have been found to be related to parent engagement in families generally, including linguistically diverse families. Less parent engagement is associated with lower levels of parents' formal schooling (Schaller, Rocha, & Barshinger, 2007), lower family socio-economic status (Mistry, Biesanz, Chien, Howes, & Benner, 2008), and less proficient parent language and literacy skills (Baker, 2014; Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2003; Keels, 2009). Parent mental health problems (Farver, Xu, Eppe, & Lonigan, 2006; Mistry et al., 2008) and smaller parent social networks (Durand, 2011) are also linked to less parent engagement.

In order to partner effectively with linguistically diverse families, early care and education programs will need to respond to both their strengths and the challenges they face. These include those shared with many other families and additional ones related to language proficiency and family circumstances, such as immigrant status. The next section examines features of early care and education programs that appear to help support effective parent-program partnerships.

What features of early care and education programs appear to contribute to high levels of parent engagement in linguistically diverse families?

Current research, while limited, suggests features of early care and education programs that can help promote meaningful parent engagement in linguistically diverse families. This section examines staff characteristics and program practices that create a welcoming, supportive environment for families and strategies programs can use to promote parent-child learning activities. In addition, the potential value of using two-generation supports that address both children's and parents' educational needs is discussed.

Creating welcoming, supportive environments for linguistically diverse families

Parent-provider relationships associated with positive family and child outcomes are characterized by mutual respect and shared decision-making (Forry, Moodie, Simkin, & Rothenburg, 2011; Forry, Bromer, Chrisler, Rothenberg, Simkin, & Daneri, 2012). Parents in linguistically diverse families may face special barriers to experiencing such relationships with early care and education providers. These parents, particularly those with limited English language skills, have reported feeling unwelcome in educational settings in numerous studies (Adams & McDaniel, 2009; Park & McHugh, 2014; Turney & Kao, 2009). Teachers' limited understanding of linguistically diverse families' life circumstances and parenting practices may contribute to parents feeling unwelcome in programs. For example, teachers may interpret nonattendance at parent-teacher conferences as lack of interest and support for children's education without considering other factors such as work schedules and the need for translation services. Similarly, when teachers are not aware of culturally appropriate practices that parents use to promote children's learning, it may be more difficult to establish a positive relationship with parents (Halguneth, Jia, & Barbarin, 2013; Parecki and Gear, 2013). For example, Latina mothers employ culturally valued approaches to encourage their children's educational success, including *consejos* (stories and admonitions that reinforce personal characteristics such as

resilience and perseverance) and *apoyo* (emotional and moral support to build self-confidence and self-discipline) (Ramos, 2014). Such practices may not be evident to early care and education providers if they are mainly focused on other signs of parent engagement such as parent communication with providers and participation in the classroom.

Research on specific program features and practices that can foster positive relationships between program staff and linguistically diverse families is limited, but suggestive. Professional development has been found to increase teachers' understanding of cultural differences affecting parent engagement and use of more flexible parent engagement strategies, although most studies have focused on elementary school teachers (DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Hernandez, 2003). One study of cultural competence among infant-toddler caregivers, measured by the Infant and Toddler Caregiver Cultural Rating Scale, found that hours of diversity training and extent of reading about diversity contributed to providers' cultural competence (Obegi & Ritblatt, 2005).

Bilingual, bicultural program staff appear key to helping parents in linguistically diverse families feel welcome and comfortable with teachers. In a study of Spanish-speaking Mexican-American families, parents of children with delays in their literacy skills became more involved in their children's schooling between kindergarten and third grade if their children were in classrooms with bilingual teachers, and increased involvement during this period predicted children's learning outcomes (Tang, Dearing, & Weiss, 2012). Several parent engagement interventions delivered in families' home language have had positive impacts on parenting or children's learning (Moore, Caal, Rojas, & Lawner, 2014; Starkey and Klein, 2000).

Creating opportunities for parents of similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds to get to know each other is another program practice that may support

parent engagement in early care and education program activities. In a national study of English- and Spanish-speaking Latino families with kindergarten-age children, the strongest predictor of school involvement was the number of other parents in their child's class whom the parents knew well enough to converse with (Durand, 2011). Other researchers have documented the development of social networks among Spanish-speaking parents that grew out of supportive parent-to-parent interactions during an elementary school-based leadership program and led to greater parent involvement in children's schooling (Bolívar & Chrispeels, 2011).

A number of other practices aimed at creating a welcoming, supportive environment for families have been suggested by researchers as promising strategies that should be further examined. These include enlisting community organizations that serve linguistically diverse families in efforts to promote parent engagement, having teachers extend personal invitations to parents in these families to participate in activities such as parent-teacher conferences, offering family-teacher conferences in a group format for parents with shared linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and providing supports to meet families' basic needs as part of family engagement activities (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Delgado Gaitan, 2012; Halgunseth et al., 2013; Kim, 2009; Maríñez-Lora and Quintana, 2009; Matthews & Ewen, 2006; McWayne et al., 2008; Rivera-Singletary, 2009; Rodela, 2013).

Supporting Parent-Child Learning Activities at Home

Early care and education programs can play a critical role in promoting children's learning and development by encouraging parents to engage in learning activities with their young children at home (Crosnoe, 2010; Smith, Robbins, Stagman, & Mathur, 2013; Van Voorhis et al., 2013). This strategy may be especially important for linguistically diverse parents who prefer home-based parent engagement (Mendez, et al., 2013). Programs can provide a range of supports, including information (e.g., about the value of parent-child interactions in the family's home language);

materials, such as books and math games, and demonstrations of learning activities.

The practice of encouraging parents to engage in home-based enrichment activities in the family's home language may be particularly important. A recent research review highlights the benefits of parents' use of the family's home language, even as children are learning English (McCabe et al, 2013). These authors conclude that non-English-speaking or limited-English-speaking parents often provide the strongest language support for overall language development by conversing with children in their first language. Some family literacy programs that were conducted in families' home languages have shown positive language and literacy outcomes for children (Boyce, Roggman, Jump, & Innocenti, 2010; Rodríguez-Brown, 2004).

A small number of intensive parent engagement interventions in early education programs that target or include linguistically diverse families have shown promise in their ability to achieve high levels of family participation, enhance parent-child learning activities, and benefit children's learning. Examples of these are described in Box 1. These programs share several features that may contribute to these outcomes, including: 1) an explicit focus on children's school-readiness competencies, including social-emotional, language, literacy, and numeracy skills; 2) opportunities for parents to observe and actively practice effective ways to support their children's learning in the context of warm, nurturing interactions; 3) the provision of supports and materials that encourage parents' engagement in these types of interactions at home; and 4) the intentional use of strategies that reduce barriers to participation in the intervention. A recent analysis of parent engagement interventions in early childhood programs underscores the value of giving parents opportunities to practice activities with their children after seeing demonstrations of the activities. In this analysis, only interventions that included this feature were found to promote children's pre-academic skills, leading the researchers to conclude that modeling and parent practice are key to effective parent engagement interventions (Grindal et al., 2013).

Box 1: Promising Parent Engagement Programs

The East Coast Collaborative for Enhancing Language and Literacy (ECCELL) program was developed in collaboration with a Migrant and Seasonal Head Start program which largely served young, impoverished Hispanic children and families with limited English proficiency. A bilingual adaptation of *Building Language for Literacy* was used in the Head Start classrooms and adult ESL (English as a second language) courses were provided to parents. In addition, parent-child activities and home visits offered parents guidance about how to promote their children's language and literacy development. Families were given rotating sets of books and language- and literacy-fostering manipulatives as well as a multimedia English learning resource, *Inglés sin Barreras*. Children in this program had higher scores on measures of language, early literacy, and socio-emotional development than children in comparison sites (Barrueco, 2012).

The Family Mathematics Curriculum was implemented with groups of African-American and Latino Head Start families, including about 40% who were Spanish-speaking. During Saturday classes, teachers demonstrated how parents could use manipulatives to engage in enjoyable math activities with their children, and supported parents and children as they tried out the activities. Teachers' provided the sessions in Spanish to Spanish-speaking families. To encourage continued activities at home, families were given kits with math materials. Parent participation was high, a fact attributed to the focus on identifying and helping parents address barriers to

attendance. Children in the intervention group made greater gains in all targeted math skills than children who did not participate (Starkey & Klein, 2000).

The Getting Ready for School (GRS) program targets both literacy and mathematics skills, and has been piloted with Spanish-speaking Head Start families. Families attended a series of sessions that provided demonstrations of activities and hands-on practice with materials that could be used at home. Parents also received a guide that illustrated activities with pictures. A preliminary study showed greater gains in school readiness skills for the children in the intervention group compared to children whose parents did not participate (Noble et al., 2012).

The Getting Ready intervention provided ten home visits over two years to Head Start parents and children, 20% of whom were non-English speakers. This intervention included modeling and guidance for parents in using nurturing interactions and natural learning opportunities in the home to promote school readiness. Across two studies, children participating in the Getting Ready intervention were found to have stronger social-emotional and language skills than non-participating children (Sheridan, Knoche, Edwards, Bovaird, & Kupzyk, 2010). Children who entered the Getting Ready intervention with minimal English abilities made even larger gains in reading and language than English-speaking children participating in the program (Sheridan, Knoche, Kupzyk, Edwards, & Marvin, 2011).

In addition to the shared features of these interventions, one of the programs also illustrates a two-generation strategy which may be especially beneficial to parents with limited English proficiency and their children. The East Coast Collaborative for Enhancing Language and Literacy provided support for home-based parent-child activities to promote children's learning as part of classes to help parents learn English. Because functional illiteracy and weak English language skills may limit both home-based and program-based parent engagement,

two-generation literacy development approaches in early childhood have been recommended (Park & McHugh, 2014). Some intergenerational literacy programs have been successful in improving English proficiency for both parents and children (Anderson, Purcell-Gates, Jang, & Gagne, 2010; Rodríguez-Brown, 2004). For example, Literacy for Life raised parents' English literacy and their young children's emergent literacy skills through a combination of adult literacy, early childhood literacy, and parent-child activities (Anderson et al., 2010).

Policy Implications

The research reviewed in this brief highlights the need for policies that can help early care and education programs expand their capacity to effectively partner with parents in linguistically diverse families. Policies that could help build this capacity would support a set of key strategies that include:

- ▶ establishing program requirements and quality standards that specifically address the needs and interests of families whose home language is not English;
- ▶ providing educational opportunities to individuals who can increase the linguistic and cultural diversity and competency of the early care and education workforce;
- ▶ providing resources to support programs' use of parent engagement practices and activities that are most promising for linguistically diverse families; and
- ▶ using data to understand the participation of linguistically diverse families in parent engagement activities and inform efforts to strengthen programs' capacity to engage diverse families.

Policy Recommendations

More specific policy recommendations related to these strategies are suggested below.

- ▶ **Program requirements for early care and education programs and standards for quality established in Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS) should specify a wide range of promising practices that early care and education programs can use to partner with linguistically diverse families. (See Box 2 for a description of these practices.)**

Overall, current early care and education program requirements and QRIS quality standards focused on parent engagement tend to be fairly general and limited in their focus on supports for home-based learning in all families and in linguistically diverse families (e.g., Smith et al, 2012). QRIS standards could therefore be strengthened in two

ways – by including a wider range of the promising practices, such as those shown in Box 2, and by providing more specific descriptions of methods that promote meaningful home-based parent-child learning activities, especially strategies that go beyond the provision of information.

In setting program requirements and quality standards designed to promote parent engagement in linguistically diverse families, states can build on the extensive guidance and resources developed for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. These include the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and resources provided by the National Technical Assistance Centers on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness and on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, as well as program performance standards (see Attachment 1). In addition, several state QRIS have included specific standards that address engagement of linguistically diverse families; examples are shown in Attachment 2.

- ▶ **States should design and invest in workforce development policies that expand the number of linguistically diverse and culturally competent early care and education professionals who have expertise in promoting parent engagement.**

As the population of young children and their families becomes increasingly diverse, expanding the number of bilingual, bicultural individuals in the early care and education workforce is critical. These professionals also need the knowledge and skills necessary to partner effectively with linguistically and culturally diverse families. Workforce development policies to achieve this goal include the following:

- States should develop and invest in supports for early childhood practitioners and potential practitioners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to help them obtain early childhood teacher or family worker credentials; these supports could include scholarships, advisement and mentoring, and assistance with child care and related needs.

Box 2: Promising Practices in Early Care and Education Programs that Support Parent Engagement in Linguistically Diverse Families

- ▶ The program has bilingual staff who are fluent in the languages most often represented among the families of enrolled children. These staff are available to support teacher-parent communication.
- ▶ The program invites parents to share information about their home language use, methods they use to promote their child's learning and development, family strengths and challenges, and goals for their children's education and for parent development and advancement; this information is used to plan parent engagement and family support activities.
- ▶ Information about the program—including consent forms, descriptions of procedures for child assessment, newsletters, and invitations to events—is provided in families' home languages; important information is provided orally in families' home languages for parents with limited reading skills.
- ▶ Program staff communicate with parents about methods for supporting learning at home in the parents' home language and use multiple formats for this communication, including individual meetings, group parent meetings, home visits, and the provision of home learning materials with easy-to-use guidance.
- ▶ The program provides opportunities for parents to see and practice culturally relevant adult-child activities that foster a supportive parent-child relationship and children's learning.
- ▶ Program staff provide guidance for families about the value of helping children further develop their home language skills through parent-child conversations and activities that draw on cultural and family traditions.
- ▶ The program reaches out to parents in linguistically diverse families to help remove barriers to their participation in program-based parent engagement activities; methods for reducing barriers include the use of interpreters, meeting with the parent at a time that accommodates their work schedule, arranging a discussion by phone, and assisting with transportation and child care.
- ▶ The program provides opportunities for families from the same linguistic and cultural background to develop social networks with each other, including family and parent-child events.
- ▶ The program helps parents obtain needed supports and services such as English as a Second Language as well as vocational training, health and mental health services, or assistance meeting basic family needs.
- ▶ Staff are provided with professional development on cultural and linguistic diversity and on engaging linguistically diverse parents.
- ▶ The program periodically assesses its use of practices designed to include and support linguistically diverse parents as partners in promoting children's well-being and early learning.

- States should require that higher education early childhood teacher preparation programs include coursework and practica that develop knowledge of effective parent engagement practices and competencies needed to partner effectively with linguistically and culturally diverse families.
- Institutions of higher education and state agencies should collaborate to develop onsite, credit-bearing professional development for linguistically diverse early childhood program staff who may find it challenging to attend classes during normally scheduled times or who experience other barriers to accessing higher education.
- ▶ **State and federal agencies should provide adequate resources to enable early care and education programs to meet effective program requirements and quality standards that support the engagement of parents in linguistically diverse families.**
 - State agencies responsible for child care and early education programs and quality improvement initiatives should fund and ensure delivery of technical assistance to help these programs build their capacity to partner with linguistically diverse families. Technical assistance should include guidance for teachers and directors

about how to implement practices shown in Box 2, especially about ways to establish positive relationships with parents and encourage parents' support of their children's learning at home and in the community. If early care and education programs are administered out of separate agencies, these agencies should collaborate in the design and provision of such supports to programs.

- State funding for preschool and other early care and education programs should be sufficient for programs to have access to bilingual family workers, either as program staff or as consultants serving multiple programs, who can support outreach to parents and delivery of the programs' parent engagement activities. Bilingual family workers can also help families gain access to other supports such as English as a Second Language or vocational programs, health or mental health services, and assistance to meet basic family needs.
- State-funded organizations, such as child care resource and referral agencies or institutions of higher education, should be given resources and guidance to offer translation services to early care and education programs for parent outreach and engagement materials and activities.

► **State and federal agencies should develop guidance and supports for documenting and understanding the characteristics of families enrolled in early care and education programs and programs' parent engagement resources and practices, including those aimed at fostering partnerships with linguistically diverse families.**

While there are increasing investments in early care and education at the local, state, and federal levels, resources remain limited. Collecting and analyzing basic data on capacity across all early care and education programs and settings to partner with linguistically diverse families can help provide information necessary to more effectively design and target those resources. Examples of such data include:

- the number of children from linguistically diverse families in the program setting and the home languages represented in the program setting;
- program resources for partnering with linguistically diverse families, including bilingual family workers and teaching staff; and
- participation by linguistically diverse families in the program's parent engagement activities, including their use of home learning materials provided by the program.

Opportunities to Advance These Recommendations

The current landscape of policies and initiatives designed to expand and improve the quality of early care and education programs offers important opportunities to advance the policy recommendations outlined above. These recommendations are well-aligned with language about parent engagement in the newly reauthorized Child Care Development Block Grant program, which will increase the funds available to states for quality improvement activities. Allowable uses of these quality set-aside funds include training and professional development for the early care and education workforce on engaging parents in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to help them support their children's learning and development.⁶ In addition, as states expand their prekindergarten programs with federal and state funds, and establish and refine QRIS, they have opportunities to strengthen program requirements and quality standards that can help ensure effective program partnerships with linguistically diverse families. Finally, the new federal Early Head Start-Child Care partnership grants extend stronger parent engagement requirements to child care settings, creating the possibility for an expanding number of programs that demonstrate promising practices for engaging linguistically diverse families and promoting children's learning through partnerships with parents in these families.

Conclusion

A growing body of research supports both the value of parent engagement for children in linguistically diverse families and promising approaches that child care and early education programs can use to engage these families more fully in their children's learning. During a time of program expansion in the early

childhood field, it is especially critical to include these families in parent engagement initiatives. All parents want to support school success and positive life opportunities for their children; parents' partnership with child care and early education programs is a proven strategy for achieving this goal.

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Endnotes

1. The term family engagement is often used to emphasize the role of all family members in promoting young children's learning. In the research on school-age children, the term parent involvement is generally used. We use parent engagement here to emphasize the critical role of parents (or adults acting in the role of parents) in young children's development and to reinforce the understanding that parents support learning, not only via direct involvement with their children's care and education setting, but also through attitudes and behaviors that are especially evident in the parent-child relationship and parent-child activities at home and in community settings.
2. From data calculated on May 11, 2015, from the Young Child Risk Calculator developed and maintained by the National Center for Children in Poverty (see www.nccp.org/tools/risk/).
3. Of the approximately 25 million individuals age 5 and older who were reported to have limited English proficiency in 2012, about 20.3 million (over 80%) were immigrants (Nwosu, Batalova, & Auclair, 2014).
4. See Matthews & Jang (2007), and Kirmani & Leung (2008), for discussions of challenges and barriers faced by both documented and undocumented immigrants in early care and education access and engagement.
5. About 10% of persons obtaining legal permanent resident status in 2012 were refugees (Office of Immigration Statistics, 2013). More than one-third of refugee arrivals (37% or 21,292 individuals) in that year were dependent children.
6. See: www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/ccdbg_reauthorization_comparison_chart_final_12_01_14docx_2.pdf.

Attachment 1: Resources from Head Start Related to Parent & Family Engagement and Cultural Responsiveness

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework: Promoting Family Engagement and School Readiness from Prenatal to Age 8 (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/im/2011/pfce-framework.pdf>)

Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five (http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/Revisiting%20Multicultural%20Principles%20for%20Head%20Start_English.pdf)

Program Preparedness Checklist, Version 5.0: A Tool to Assist Head Start and Early Head Start Programs to Assess Their Systems and Services for Dual Language Learners and Their Families (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/ProgramPreparedn.htm>) – excerpted

Section 6. Family Partnerships

- **Subsection A:** Parents and family members as a child's first teachers
 - **Indicator a:** Observe and ask about teaching and learning experiences in the family (home and community) in order to identify strengths of the family environment and to integrate this information with our service delivery
 - **Indicator b:** Exchange information on a child's developmental progress and discuss the child's goals, strengths, and needs with families on a regular basis.
 - **Indicator c:** Continuously dialogue with families about the importance of supporting their child's home language.
 - **Indicator d:** Include community partners and volunteers in our training on first and second language development and supporting home culture.
- **Subsection B:** Family Partnership Agreements
 - **Indicator a:** Work diligently to ensure that families understand the FPA process and are equal partners in creating, revisiting, and revising their FPA.
 - **Indicator b:** Listen to and work with families to include family literacy goals into the FPA that lead to economic self-sufficiency and financial literacy.
 - **Indicator c:** Listen to and work with families to include family literacy goals in the FPA that encourage them to do literacy-related activities with their child.
 - **Indicator d:** Include information about families' goals for their children's home and/or English language development in the FPA.
 - **Indicator e:** Write FPAs in the preferred language(s) of the family.

- **Subsection C:** Family involvement in children's learning
 - **Indicator c:** Encourage families to adopt a long-term commitment to supporting their child's home language development throughout their school years.
 - **Indicator d:** Specifically reach out to families of dual language learners to encourage their participation in projects and activities with their child at home and in the classroom.

Head Start National Technical Assistance Centers:

- National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>)
- National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family>)

Relevant Head Start Performance Standards:

- **1304.21 (3)(i)(E)** Supporting and respecting the home language, culture, and family composition of each child in ways that support the child's health and well-being.
- **1304.51 (c)** Communication with families. (1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year.
- **1304.40 (e)(1)** Parent involvement in child development and education. Grantee and delegate agencies must provide opportunities to include parents in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development and education.
- **1306.22 (b)** Special efforts must be made to have volunteer participation, especially parents, in the classroom and during group socialization activities.
- **1306.32 (b)(9)** Head Start grantees operating migrant programs are required to plan for a minimum of two parent-teacher conferences for each child during the time they serve that child. Should time and circumstance allow, migrant programs must make every effort to conduct home visits.
- **1304.51 (c)** Communication with families. (1) Grantee and delegate agencies must ensure that effective two-way comprehensive communications between staff and parents are carried out on a regular basis throughout the program year. (2) Communication with parents must be carried out in the parents' primary or preferred language or through an interpreter, to the extent feasible.

Attachment 2: Sample Standards from State Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Colorado - Family Partnerships

- **Home Language Standard 2.1:** The program provides documentation or written policy of the use of interpreters, or other resources to help with other languages of enrolled families
- **Sensitivity to Diversity Standard 2.2:** The program provides materials and resources (information about community-based programs, community mental health, child nutrition, physical fitness, food banks, Child Find, medical/dental resources) in a way that is accessible to all families including families with high needs [Children with high needs are defined as children who: live in low-income families; have disabilities or developmental delays; are English-language learners; reside on “Indian lands;” live in migrant families; are homeless; live in foster care; or are recent immigrants.]
- **Sensitivity to Diversity Standard 2.3:** The program offers opportunities for all families, including those from different backgrounds and communities, to get to know one another and work together for the benefit of the children in the program
- **Engagement of Families Standard 2.10:** The program provides a series of parenting classes annually, which includes family goal setting and action plans

Massachusetts – Family and Community Engagement

- **Standards applicable at Level 3:** A daily two-way communication system is available between the educators and families through a variety of means. Families are encouraged to volunteer in the program, to assist in the classroom, and share cultural and language traditions or other interests such as their jobs, hobbies, and other relevant information. Program ensures that there are translators available, as needed, at meetings, workshops, and conferences to ensure strong communication between the program and families. Program participates in local community group work that is related to early childhood, and the cultural groups served by the program and/or family support.

Miami-Dade – Family Support and Inclusion

- All teachers invite families to define their ethnicity or culture and do not assume based on appearances.
- All teachers invite family members to share information about their cultural backgrounds (e.g., history, traditions, and home language).
- All teachers communicate to families that their goal is to have a partnership with them in which each can learn from each other.
- Program has a language policy in the Family Handbook and Staff Handbook that embraces children’s home language and determines a set of goals for children (e.g., bilingualism for all children, etc.).

- All teachers encourage children to speak their home language to other children, staff, or parents from the same backgrounds.
- Program and teachers encourage staff, families, and children to learn about each other’s racial, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds by having a variety of year-round activities.
- All teachers use children’s home language for multiple learning purposes, not just in giving directions or managing behavior.
- All teachers have books, music, print, and other materials in children’s home languages in the classrooms.
- Program shares strategies and ideas with staff on how the program can support children’s identity, honor home language, and address issues of bias.

New Mexico (revised) – Full Participation of Each Child

- **Family Engagement:** There is evidence in lesson plans and center logs that center staff encourage family members to share cultural heritage and practices, stories, activities, and language in the daily classroom activities.
- **Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners:**
 - The program ensures materials and visuals in the classroom reflect the culture and language of the children and families enrolled in the program.
 - Classroom staff learn from families about their family structure, their preferred child-reading practices, and information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds.
 - Classroom and program staff offer a variety of meaningful, culturally sensitive opportunities for families to participate in classroom and center activities.
 - The program makes every effort to hire staff reflective of cultures and languages of families enrolled in the program.
 - Families who speak languages other than English are involved in developing policies and procedures related to DLLs and participate in CQI process.

Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

Child Care and Early Education *Research Connections*, a free comprehensive collection of online resources, promotes high-quality research in child care and early education. Launched in 2004, *Research Connections* is a partnership of the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University and the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan, and is funded by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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